

TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUSTICE ALLIANCE

Judiciary Committee

S.B. No. 16 AN ACT ADDRESSING GUN VIOLENCE AND JUVENILE CRIME
IN OPPOSITION OF SB 16



March 14, 2022

Dear Chairs Senator Winfield, Representatives Stafstrom, and members of the Judiciary committee:

My name is Ronnie Henderson and I am a Justice Advisor with the [Connecticut Justice Alliance](#) (CTJA) and I'm writing this testimony to communicate my strong opposition for [S.B. No. 16](#), AN ACT ADDRESSING GUN VIOLENCE AND JUVENILE CRIME.

The CTJA is a statewide youth-adult partnership working to end the criminalization of youth. The Alliance includes Justice Staff, Justice Advisors, and Steering Committee members, which includes lawyers, researchers, clinicians, and social workers, who work across issues areas such as mental/behavioral health, family advocacy, substance abuse, youth services, LGBTQ+ issues, legal representation, education, community and residential services, and public policy reform.

I am opposing this bill because I strongly believe that the youth deserve a more fair approach when it comes to certain things that they can't control. Most of these youths are struggling egregiously. Instead of punishing them so hard for crimes, other alternatives should be taken to address the root of the problem. Adding additional charges to the definition of SJOs, or serious juvenile offenders, only causes them to get lost further in the system without properly correcting and addressing the problem. Our brains aren't fully developed until the age 25 so many of these young people have no solid control or cognizance over their actions. They're lacking the proper sense to comprehend the magnitude of the punishments set by the system. We need to start finding other ways to meet the needs of our young people, prior to an arrest, before allowing them to get lost in the system before they had the chance to fully explore life and grow, and we need to do so intentionally. To say this legislature will implement a program "within available appropriations" is not sufficient. There needs to be a set amount of money saved for programming, set aside intentionally and planned intentionally to meet the needs of our youth who are struggling.

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today.

Sincerely,
Ronnie Henderson, *Justice Advisor*

For Justice Advisor inquiries please reach out to Community Connections Associate, Jordyn Wilson
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